

I claim:

9/22
1. A device for holding a sheetlike article on a movable underlying surface for transporting the sheetlike article at least in one direction selected from the group thereof consisting of a direction into and a direction out of an operating station having a printing unit, comprising a member having a surface underlying the sheetlike article, the sheetlike article being retainable by pneumatic pressure on said surface, a screening device disposed locally fixedly with respect to an operating station, said screening device serving for reducing an airflow in a region of the printing unit at least with respect to adjacent regions, the reduction in the airflow resulting from the sheetlike article being held on said underlying surface.

2. The holding and transporting device according to claim 1, wherein the printing unit is an ink-jet unit.

3. The holding and transporting device according to claim 1, wherein the underlying surface is on a movable belt formed with through-passage holes.

4. The holding and transporting device according to claim 1, wherein said screening device has a sheet-like mesh formed with holes and disposed beneath the underlying surface, the holes of said mesh being of such number and size that, as a

result of flow resistance thereof, there is an adequate reduction in the airflow in the region of the printing unit.

Sub 23

5. The holding and transporting device according to claim 1, wherein a virtually limited first suction chamber is disposed beneath the region of the printing unit, said screening device having a throttle opening via which said first suction chamber is connected to a negative-pressure source.

Sub 23

6. The holding and transporting device according to claim 5, including further suction chambers connected to said negative-pressure source, said further suction chambers being located adjacent to said first suction chamber and having a greater negative pressure than that of said first suction chamber.

7. The holding and transporting device according to claim 4, wherein said mesh is disposed beneath a cover plate formed with pass-through openings, said cover plate covering said suction chambers and serving for guiding said belt.

Sub 23

8. The holding and transporting device according to claim 7, wherein said mesh is connected to said cover plate.

9. The holding and transporting device according to claim 8, wherein the connection of said mesh to said cover plate is a

connection selected from the group thereof consisting of integral and releasable connections.

10. The holding and transporting device according to claim 1, wherein said underlying surface is on a continuous transport belt formed with holes around the length thereof and guidable in given sections by said cover plate.

11. The holding and transporting device according to claim 1, wherein said pneumatic pressure is selected from the group thereof consisting of positive and negative pressures.